KING'S GAME
ORIGIN
WE RETURN TO 1977 AND THE MOUNTAIN VILLAGE OF YONAKI PURPOSEFULLY ISOLATED FROM THE WORLD AT LARGE BY ITS INHABITANTS. THE KING'S SEVENTH ORDER STATES THAT ONE PERSON MUST COMMIT SUICIDE EVERY EIGHT HOURS, OR A RANDOM INHABITANT WILL BE KILLED BY HAVING THEIR BONES SHREDDED. YUNJI'S SISTER SANAE BECAME THE SECOND SACRIFICE, BUT AMIDST THE CRUSHING DESPAIR COMES A SHOCKING REVELATION... "WE'VE UNCOVERED THE KING'S IDENTITY"
RATTLE
RATTLE
MURMUR
MURMUR
.....?

I KNOW THIS IS SUDDEN...
...BUT I HAVE URGENT NEWS
FRIDAY AUGUST 19, 5:23 P.M.
WHAT'S GOING ON?

GASP
WE...
...ARE
VILLAGE,
EFFECTIVE

SIGN: HEADQUARTERS

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU'RE LEAVING?!
WE ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE CURRENT... SITUATION.
IN A FEW MORE HOURS SOMEONE'S GOING TO DIE!
NONE OF US ARE HAPPY ABOUT IT, EITHER.

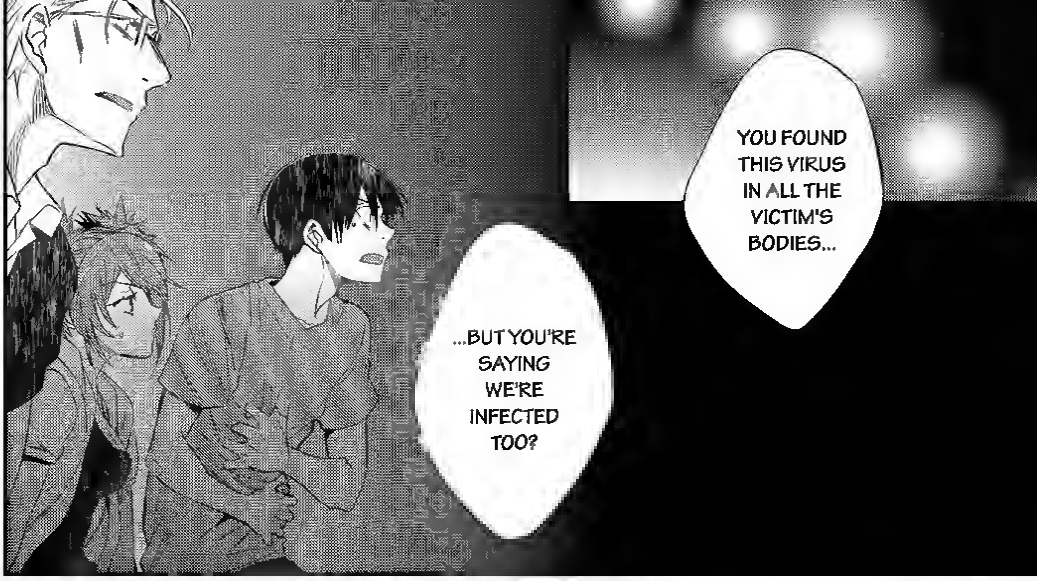
GASP
BUT NOW THAT WE KNOW THE KING'S IDENTITY...
...WE HAVE TO WORK TO PREVENT FURTHER CASUALTIES.
THEY KNOW...
...WHO THE KING IS?
CHAPTER 20
KING'S GAME
ORIGIN
STORY BY NOBUAKI KANAZAWA
ART BY J-TA

WHO?!
WHO IS...
...THE KING?!
THAT...
MIYAZAWA-KUN
I'LL LET MIYAZAWA-KUN EXPLAIN
THE KING..
...IS NOT A PERSON.

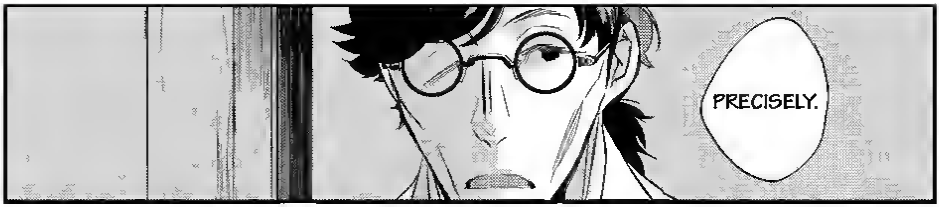
IT IS A NEW KIND OF VIRUS.
VIRUS ...?
WHAT THE HELL IS HE TALKING ABOUT?!
THE KING IS A VIRUS?!
THE KING CAN'T BE A VIRUS... THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.

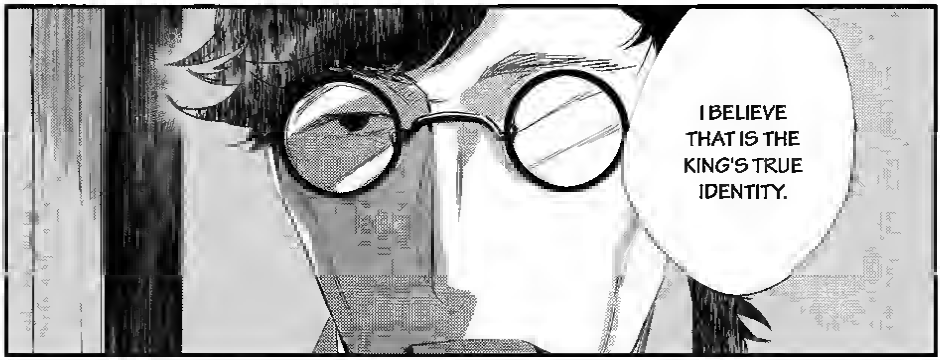
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE...
VIRUSES ARE JUST LITTLE CREATURES THAT CAUSE DISEASES, RIGHT?!
BIOLOGICALLY SPEAKING, THEY'RE NOT LIVING BEINGS.
A VIRUS HAS NO METABOLISM OF ITS OWN. IT IS A PARASIDIC INFECTIOUS AGENT THAT REQUIRES A HOST CELL.
WE DISCOVERED THIS NEW VIRUS DURING AN AUTOPSY OF THE YOUNG GIRL.
YOU MEAN SUZUKO...?
HER, AND...

WE FOUND THE VIRUS IN ALL OF YOUR BLOOD SAMPLES, AS WELL.
IT'S... IN ALL... OUR BODIES..?
WHA
CLUTCH
SHIVER
MY BLOOD... IT'S INSIDE ME...



IMPOSSIBLE.





WHAT THE HELL IS HE TALKING ABOUT?

A VIRUS CAN'T WRITE A LETTER, FOR GOD'S SAKE!
THE KING SENT LETTERS TO MAKE US PLAY THE KING'S GAME!
SLAM
B-BUT...
...HOW DOES THAT MAKE SENSE?!

I BELIEVE THIS VIRUS IS CAPABLE OF BOTH COMPREHENDING AND MANIPULATING HUMAN THOUGHT.
THAT IS TRUE. HOWEVER ...

IT ONLY CONTROLLED THE FIRST PERSON IT INFECTED...
PERHAPS—
THEY DIDN'T KNOW..?
...WITHOUT THEM EVER NOTICING.
THAT'S WHY WE COULD NEVER FIND THE KING.
SUBCONSCIOUSLY.
HO—
HOLD ON A SECOND!

...
EVERY LAST BONE IN MY FATHER'S BODY WAS SMASHED TO BITS!
YOU'RE TELLING ME A VIRUS DID THAT?!
I BELIEVE IT'S POSSIBLE, YES.

"DANGEROUS"
"DEADLY"
"FILTHY"
...PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE OF JUDGING THINGS IN AN INSTANT.
AND IT'S VITAL TO OUR SURVIVAL.
IT'S CALLED AN "EMOTIONAL REACTION"— EVEN A "GUT INSTINCT."

OUR SENSE OF PAIN, OUR RECOGNITION OF DANGER...
...KEEPS OUR BODIES SAFE.
THINK OF HOW YOUR LEGS START WOBBLING WHEN YOU CLIMB UP TO A HIGH PLACE
THAT'S YOUR BODY RECOGNIZING THE DANGER IT'S IN AND REACTING.
IT IS ONE OF OUR MANY DEFENSE MECHANISMS.

SO IT'S OUR EMOTIONS PHYSICALLY AFFECTING OUR BODIES?
THERE'S SOMETHING CALLED THE CANNON-BARD THEORY.
ANATOMICALLY SPEAKING, THE THEORY STATES THAT AS THE HYPOTHALAMUS IS STIMULATED BY AN EXTERNAL STIMULUS. .
..PHYSICAL CHANGES OCCUR WITHIN THE BODY ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY
"THE HUMAN MIND CAN BE CONTROLLED IF CERTAIN CONDITIONS ARE MET"
"HUMAN BEINGS REACT IN UNPREDICTABLE WAYS WHEN THEY'RE ON THE VERGE OF DEATH."
THESE THEORIES AREN'T EXACTLY CREDIBLE, BUT..
CONTROLLED

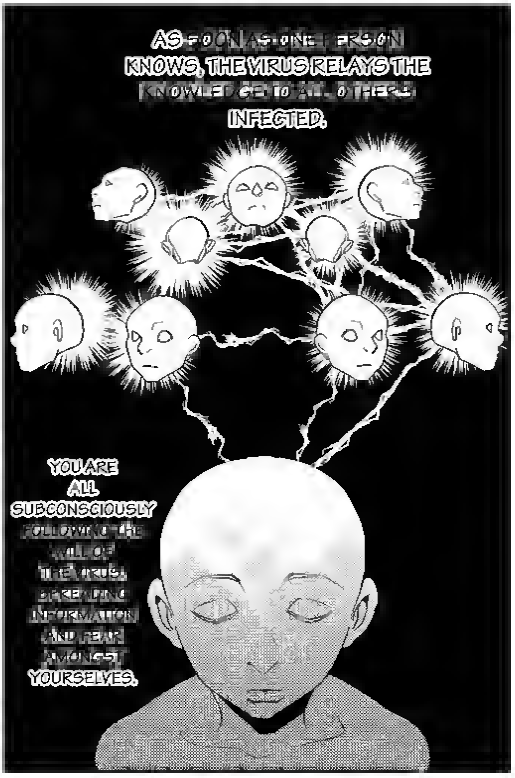
AND YOU THINK THIS VIRUS CAUSED THE SAME REACTION?
IT'S JUST MY THEORY AT THIS POINT...
...BUT IT COULD EXPLAIN WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING TO YONAKI VILLAGE.
FEAR THAT CANNOT BE ESCAPED.
FEAR THAT BREEDS MORE FEAR.
UNTIL FINALLY THE BODY REACTS...
...AND CHOOSES DEATH.
BUT WHAT BROKE HIS BONES...
...WAS KOUJI-SAN'S BODY ITSELF.
THE TRIGGER WAS THE VIRUS WILLING IT TO HAPPEN.
YOU MEAN TO TELL ME MY FATHER CHOSE TO HAVE HIS SKELETON SMASHED TO BITS?

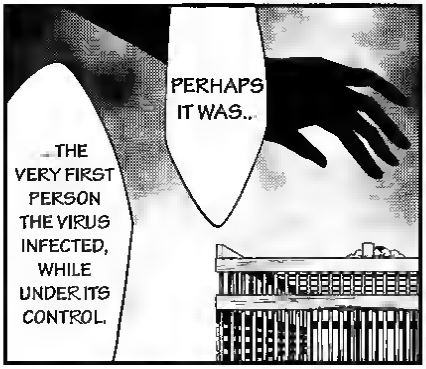
SUZUYO CAN BE EXPLAINED, BUT DAIKI NEVER EVEN KNEW ABOUT THE KING'S GAME
YOU SAY FEAR IS WHAT DROVE THEM TO DEATH...
...BUT DAIKI DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO BE AFRAID OF!
LET'S SAY THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED TO KOUJI-SAN...
HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN DAIKI AND SUZUYO DYING FROM THE FIRST ORDER?
NO...
WAIT, WAIT.
THE VIRUS'S WILL IS UNIFORM...
...AND IT COMMUNI-CATES THAT WILL ACROSS ITS INFECTED HOSTS.
AS LONG AS YOU KNEW, "DAIKI DIDN'T TOUCH THE CORPSE"...
THE VIRUS PRESENT IN THE OTHER VICTIMS WOULD KNOW AS WELL.
FINALLY, THE VIRUS WITHIN DAIKI-KUN'S BODY SENT HIS BRAIN AN ORDER.
"HANG YOURSELF."

THE ACT ITSELF IS QUITE SIMPLE...
...AKIN TO BEING HYPNO-TIZED.
THE SIGHT OF THEIR DEAD BODIES INSPIRED FEAR IN THE OTHER VILLAGERS.
AND WITH THAT AS THE FOUN-DATION, THE VIRUS'S POWER TO INFLUENCE GREW EVEN STRONGER.
AGAIN, THIS IS ALL JUST MY THEORY.

AND THE GIANT HORNETS?!
I DIDN'T NOTICE THREE OF THEM WERE DEAD 'TIL THE NEXT MORNING.
BUT SACHIKO-SAN AND THE OTHERS WERE ALREADY SLAUGHERED BY THEN!
ANOTHER INFECTED PERSON MUST HAVE LEARNED OF THE HORNETS' DEATHS BEFORE YOU.

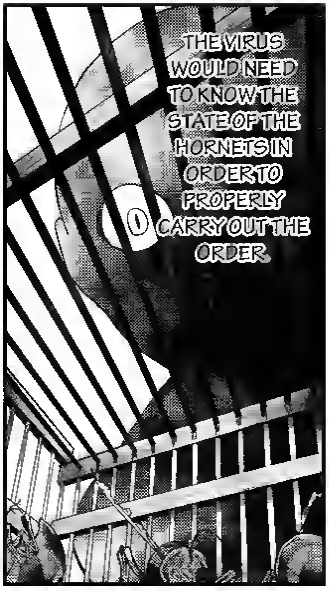
SUBCONSCIOUSLY..
SO WHO CHECKED, THEN?


AS SOON AS ONE PERSON KNOWS, THE VIRUS RELAYS THE KNOWLEDGE TO ALL OTHERS INFECTED.
YOU ARE ALL SUBCONSCIOUSLY FOLLOWING THE WILL OF THE VIRUS, SHARING INFORMATION AND FEAR AMONGST YOURSELVES.


PERHAPS IT WAS..
..THE VERY FIRST PERSON THE VIRUS INFECTED, WHILE UNDER ITS CONTROL.

THAT'S WHAT I THINK, YES.

SO THE WHOLE KING'S GAME IS THE VIRUS'S DOING?


..THE VIRUS WOULD NEED TO KNOW THE STATE OF THE HORNETS IN ORDER TO PROPERLY CARRY OUT THE ORDER.

THE VIRUS SENSED THE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS OF ITS FIRST HOST...
...AND STARTED THE KING'S GAME.
THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT THE INTENT WAS...
...BUT AS IT USED ITS HOST'S KNOWLEDGE AND THIS DEATH GAME TO BRING WIDESPREAD TERROR...
...THE VIRUS MUST HAVE DECIDED THAT MANIPULATING PEOPLE'S EMOTIONS WAS THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD.
NO WAY...
EVERYONE WAS KILLED BY A VIRUS? EVEN DAD AND GRANDMA?
HOW...
HOW DID SUCH A DEADLY VIRUS SHOW UP IN YONAKI?

I DON'T KNOW.
MAYBE A BIRD CARRIED IT HERE.
MAYBE IT'S SURVIVED IN THE REGION FOR EONS...
...AND WAS SUDDENLY ACTIVATED BY SOME EVENT.
EVENT?
SHIVER
SHIVER
HEY, MISTER SCIENTIST!
LURCH

CAN YOU MAKE MEDICINE? CAN YOU CURE US?
SO HOW DO WE GET OUT OF THIS?
FINE. WE KNOW A VIRUS IS THE PROBLEM.
I'M AFRAID THAT'S A DIFFICULT PROPOSITION.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE PREPARING TO LEAVE YONAKI.
THERE'S A POSSIBILITY THE VIRUS COULD SPREAD.
SO IT'S NOT JUST THE COPS, YOU AND THE DOCTORS ARE GOING TOO?

WHAM!
AS SOON AS YOU CAN?!
...AND COME UP WITH A PLAN AS SOON AS—
BUT WE'RE GOING TO KEEP RESEARCHING THE VIRUS...
YES. GOVERNMENT ORDERS.
YOU'RE JUST SAVING YOURSELVES!
FUCK YOU!
ONE OF US IS GONNA DIE IN SIX HOURS!
YOU AIN'T TURNING IN A REPORT!

SOME VIRUSES MUTATE AS THEY PASS FROM HOST TO HOST.
IF THIS VIRUS WERE OF THAT TYPE...
THE POTENTIAL D.A.M.AGE IS CATASTROPHIC.
I'VE ANALYZED OUR OWN BLOOD SAMPLES
I DON'T BLAME YOU FOR FEELING THAT WAY.
...AND DETERMINED NONE OF US HAVE BEEN INFECTED... YET.
WHETHER THAT'S BECAUSE OF A LOW INFECTION RATE, OR THE RATE CHANGING OVER TIME, I DON'T KNOW.
BUT I CAN'T RULE OUT THE CHANCE THAT WE COULD BE INFECTED WHILE IN CONTACT WITH YOU ALL.

AND YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT LEAVING IS POINTLESS.
WE CAN'T ALLOW YOU TO LEAVE THE VILLAGE NOW.
SO WE'RE QUARANTINED IN THE VILLAGE, IS THAT IT?
CRUSH
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED TO KONDOU YUUICHI-SAN AND MICHIYO-SAN.
THE VIRUS HAS ALREADY SPREAD TO ALL OF YOU.
TSK...

HEY, DAD, TAKE IT EASY.
GRR—
GOD DAMNIT... SHIT, SHIT, SHIT!
WELL, DUH.
POINT
HOW THE HELL CAN I TAKE IT EASY?!
THEY'RE ABAN-DONING US!
ANYONE WOULD PUT THEIR OWN LIFE FIRST.

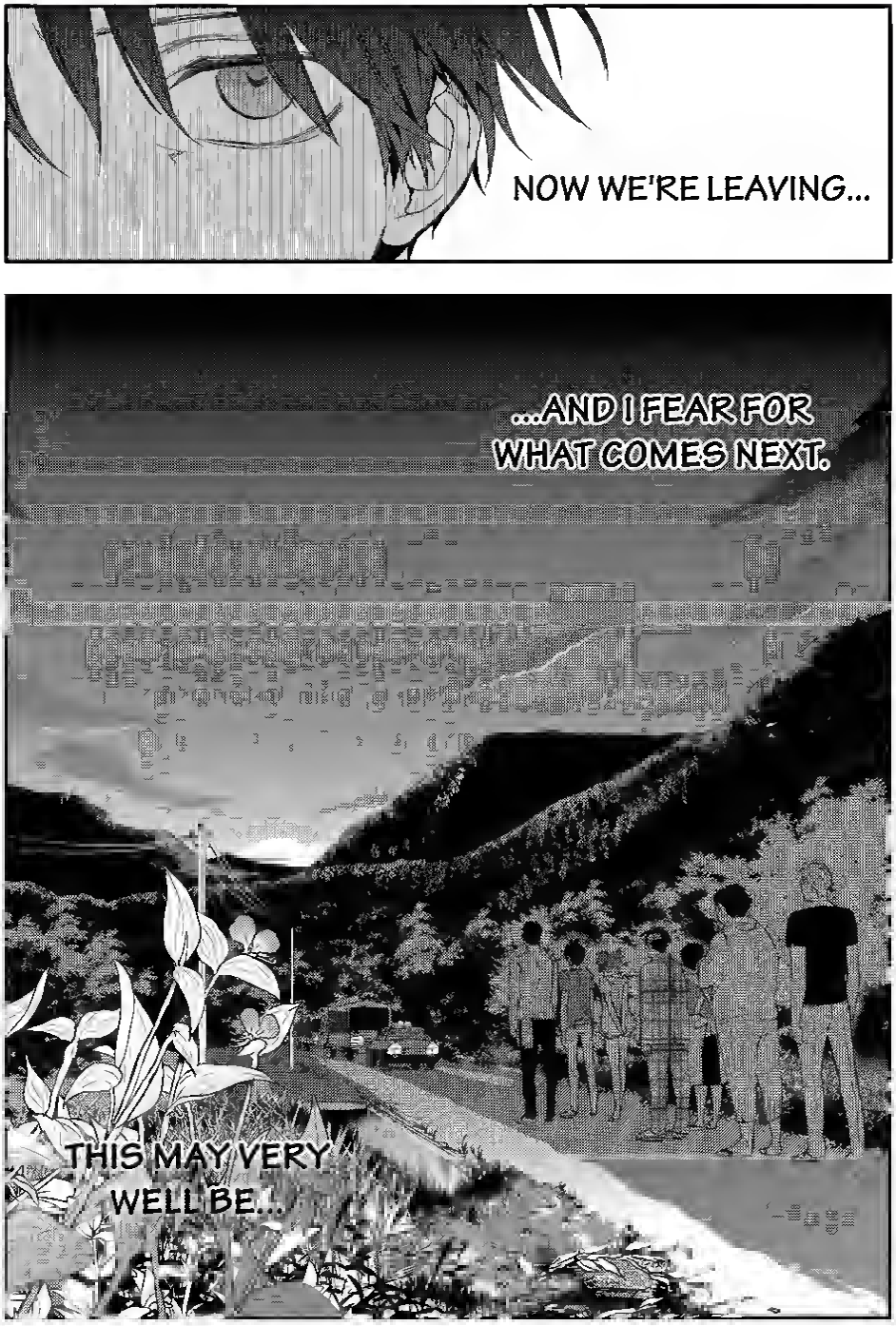
IS THERE REALLY NO WAY YOU CAN GET RID OF THE VIRUS AT THIS POINT?
HEY, SO YOU'RE LIKE, SMART, RIGHT?
SO...
IT WILL TAKE TIME TO DEVELOP AN ANTIBODY.
BUT THERE IS ONE VERY SIMPLE WAY TO ERADICATE THE VIRUS.
WHAT IS IT?

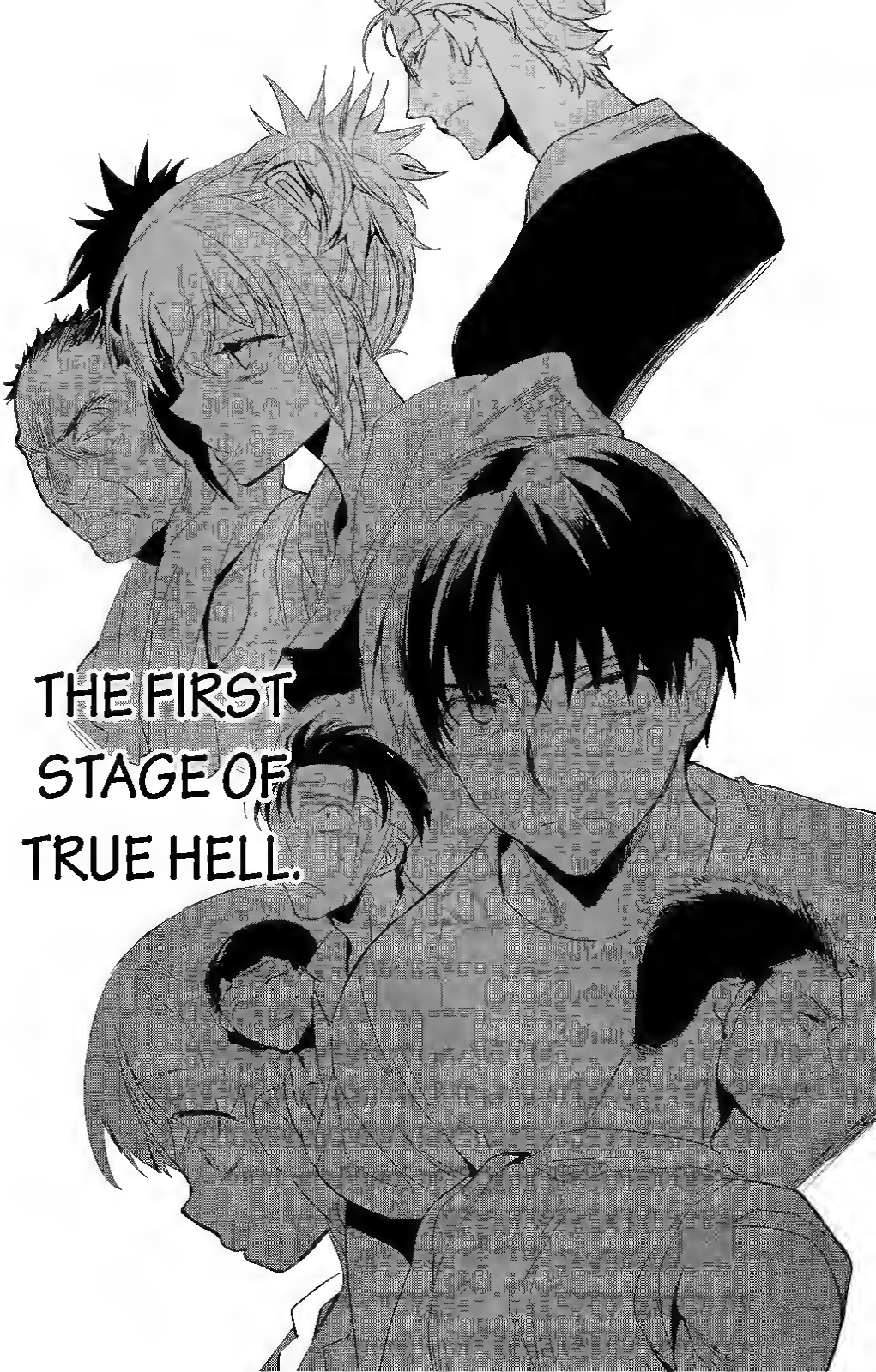
WE JUST...
LET THE VIRUS... KILL ALL OF ITS HOSTS.
BEING A PARASITE, WITHOUT A LIVING HOST, THE VIRUS WILL SIMPLY DIE.
HEH...

HA...
HA HA!
I SEE!
MAYBE THAT IS THE BEST WAY!
FOR EVERYONE WHO'S NOT US, AT LEAST!
WE HAVE ZERO INTENTION OF SUGGESTING THAT TO THE GOVERNMENT.
IF ANY MAN COULD CARRY OUT SUCH A PLAN...

...HE WOULD BE THE DEVIL IN HUMAN SKIN.
PAT
KAZU-NARI-KUN.

YOU CALLED THE POLICE USELESS.
I'M SORRY TO SAY...
...YOU WERE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.
BUT...
POWERLESS AS WE ARE, THERE'S ONE THING WE WERE ABLE TO DO.
DETERRENCE.
WE WERE ABLE TO KEEP EVERYONE FOLLOWING THE RULES, EVEN IN THIS SITUATION WHERE THE RULES DIDN'T SEEM TO APPLY.
BUT NOW...


NOW WE'RE LEAVING...
...AND I FEAR FOR WHAT COMES NEXT.
THIS MAY VERY WELL BE...


THE FIRST
STAGE OF
TRUE HELL.